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1 January 2 February 3 March
4 April/May 5 June/July
6 August/September 7 October
8 November 9 December

Dear Mr. Shanaphy:

Three years ago I semi-retired from active business and began a life-long dream to learn the piano and organ.

I got a Yamaha E-70 and a baby grand and got lucky with a teacher who started me with the Circle of Fifths.

In your January '81 issue you mentioned a book on the Circle of Fifths by "Bugs" Baer.

Do you have any idea how I can get a copy? I would settle for any music theory book using the Circle. California and Utah music stores have no idea what I'm talking about.

If you have any ideas, I will be in Utah until April 1981 (waiting for snow and going crazy).

Thanking you in advance,

Kent Child
Newport Beach, CA

It's now June, so we assume you've left Utah. We couldn't tell if "waiting for snow and going crazy" was something desirable or not, but we hope you got what you wished for. For the information on the Circle of Fifths book, see the reply to the next letter.

Dear Sir:

In the January '81 issue of *Sheet Music Magazine* there was an article on the Circle of Fifths by Ed Shanaphy in which a book on the Circle of Fifths by Bugs Baer was mentioned.

Would you please send me the name of this book so that I may continue the study of this subject.

John McCormack
W. Nyack, NY

Wow! Did we start something with Ed's "Circle of Fifths" article. Good news. We've found the book Ed Shanaphy mentioned in the January issue. It's called Chords and Progressions, *by Bugs Bower, and it can be ordered from the publisher at this address:*

Charles Colin Pubs.
315 W. 53rd Street
New York, NY 10019

The cost is $4.95.

Dear Sir:

I remember ragtime from the time I was a child in the early twenties when it was already almost dead. I have always been a little ashamed of myself for loving it to at least the partial neglect of "good" music, for I love that, too. Ragtime must be like having a mistress, beautiful but not quite respectable.

Thank you so much for indicating by your publication of it that ragtime is out of the closet.

Respectfully,
Keith Hammond, M.D.
Cape May, NJ

Many of our readers have written to agree with you. We hope the "Fats" Waller offerings in this issue are as well received. In fact, we've received so much favorable mail about the March issue that we're going to go after some more ragtime tunes for an issue in the near future. Let's hear from you ragtime buffs — what songs would you like to see in Sheet Music Magazine?

The Editor,

The articles on Pop Piano are interesting, but how about a column or two defining the various chord symbols and how to play them. For example: B7sus4; E/F bass; C/Bb; Bm7-5, etc.

Reading the symbols is easy, but how to play them needs some explaining.

Is there any publication that you would recommend?

Thank you,
John Ott
Toms River, NJ

Again, we seem to have received a rash of letters lately with similar questions, so we're preparing just such a column with definitions of these chords. The Pop Piano Workshop *in the next issue will be devoted to the so-called "slash chords," E/F, C/Bb, etc. However, to give you a pocket definition: E/F means "E with an F in the bass" — play an E Major chord, and add an F as the lowest note. The same is true of C/Bb — play a C Major chord and add a Bb as the bass note. This is, of course, the 3rd Inversion of a C7 chord, with the 7th tone as the root of the chord.*

B7sus4 is a B7 chord with an E (4th step of the B Major scale) in place of the D# (the 3rd of the B7 chord). The "sus" refers to the feeling of unresolved tension, or suspension, *that this substitution of 4th for 3rd creates; the tension is usually resolved by moving from the 4th tone back to the 3rd.*

E7-9 and Bm7-5 can be named "E7 with flatted ninth" and "B Minor 7 with flatted fifth," respectively. Finally we are currently printing our Basic Chord Dictionary, *available shortly.*

Dear Editors:

I feel that I just must let you know how much I am enjoying your magazine (easy piano version). And I especially appreciate your sending me the January 1980 issue with the article on basic music theory. I learned so much from it, and am still studying it.

I took a few (very few) lessons as a young girl, and have picked away a little ever since whenever I had time, but didn't remember very much. Now that I have time (at 65) I am delighted to have your magazine as a teacher. I knew the notes, but never knew anything about fingering — your numberings help a great deal.

Sometime I would like to read an article about proper use of the pedals. If you have already printed one, I would gladly pay for the issue if you would send it to me.

You just wouldn't believe the time I spend at the piano, and the fun I am having! I am so glad I saw your ad.

Sincerely,
Frances M. Wold
Regan, ND

We thank you for your comments, as well as for your suggestion about the use of pedals. We will devote a workshop to pedals as soon as possible. Incidently, we are going to begin including more instructional articles on basic theory in the Easy Editions of Sheet Music Magazine *as of this issue. Ron Herder's series on Intervals begins in this month's* Basic Training Workshop.

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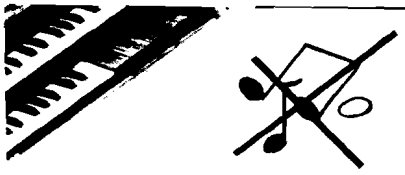

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POP PIANO

PLAYING WITH BLOCKS

by Stuart Isacoff

Playing with blocks isn't always kid stuff – especially when the "blocks" we're talking about are a type of chord "voicing" made popular by jazz great George Shearing (and duplicated by hundreds of nightclub pianists around the world).

Every professional keyboardist knows that the very same notes can produce dramatically different sounds, depending on where they are placed. In order to play a C maj. 7 chord, for example, we might choose a voicing that stretches the harmony across the length of both hands:

Ex.1

Cmaj7

This is a fairly "open" voicing. A "close" voicing of the same chord would look more like this:

Ex.2

The notes here are close to each other; in fact, they're fairly cramped.

The block chord is a form of "close-voicing" that usually accompanies each note of the melody, and produces an unmistakable "cocktail" sound. Here's how it works.

When playing a melody in block-chord fashion, we take the melody note and duplicate it one octave below. (Let's use STARDUST for practice.)

Ex.3

Continued on page 8

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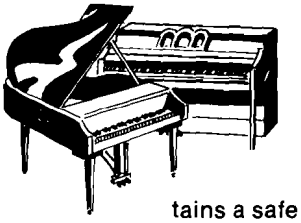

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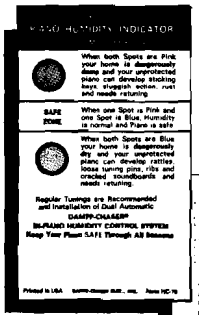

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"THE DEVIL MADE ME DO IT!"
THE MUSIC OF FATS WALLER

BY JOE KNOWLTON

Fats Waller and Ada Brown in *Stormy Weather* (May 1943)

"Say, Mr. Waller, I just saw you win that contest. I like the way you play. My name is Andy Razaf." The year was 1923, and the young Thomas Waller had just won a piano contest in New York's Roosevelt Theater, playing James P. Johnson's *Carolina Shout.* It is difficult to imagine a more significant meeting, not only because of what would eventually come of it, but also because of everything that had led to it. It was the crystalization of Thomas Waller's life to that point. Unaware, no doubt, of the portentiousness of the moment, Waller replied "Just call me 'Fats', Andy."

Thomas Waller was born in Harlem on May 21, 1904. His parents, Edward and Adeline, had a total of eleven children, of which only five survived childhood. Edward Waller brought his bride to New York City in 1888, leaving behind the poverty of rural Virginia for the promise of employment, and above all, education for their children. Following the Civil War, an ever-increasing emigration of blacks from South to North had produced quite a thriving community in New York's Greenwich Village, and the Abyssinian Baptist Church there attracted the young Waller couple, who were understandably apprehensive of life in the big city. Adeline, especially, never outgrew her fundamental distrust of urban life, and she was to be *very* protective of her children. Edward became active in the Church as a preacher, starting out by giving sermons on street corners. He had conquered a childhood stammer by teaching himself to speak very slowly and deliberately, and the result was an impressively resonant voice.

As the Abysinian Church moved uptown, first to West 40th Street then to Harlem, so did the Wallers, along with most of the black community. Born at 107 West 134th Street, Thomas sprang from the heart of Harlem. Harlem was a fascinating world all its own in these days; originally a rural community, it attracted real estate developers in the 1890's and was subject to an intense building boom designed to lure wealthy whites from downtown Manhattan. Harlem was a preview of suburbia, with its own shopping centers, schools, and rows and rows of brownstone apartments. The only problem was that you couldn't *get* there from here. Specifically, the electric trolley, slow and unreliable, was the only link between Harlem and downtown, so the new property was difficult to sell. A black real estate promoter saw his opportunity, and began moving black families up from the city.

Adeline Waller saw to it that their apartment was right next door to the public school, so that her children would not fall prey to the "evil" influences of the streets. In fact, her children were scarcely allowed out at all, so Thomas and his older sister, Naomi, were forced to perpetrate much of their mischief in the home. Thomas learned early in life to avoid punishment by playing on his mother's strong religious convictions: "I don't know what got into me — that naughty old devil told me to do it. Don't you think we ought to pray?" Naomi usually bore the brunt of their mother's wrath, so it was with great relish that she subsequently informed Mrs. Waller of her son's nickname at school: "Fats." Mrs. Waller was

Continued on page 42

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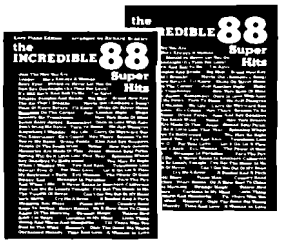

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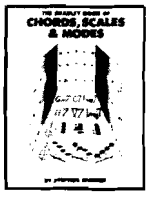

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POP PIANO *Continued from page 4*

We now have the top and bottom notes of our chords. All that's left is to fill in the other chord tones. We started with five voices, so we'll maintain the same number throughout.

Ex.4

If we were to eliminate the 6th or 7th from the harmony the sound would fall apart. The block chord effect depends on the bunched-together quality that occurs when those chord tones are added. (Notice that we end up playing an F maj. 7 instead if F6 in measure 2, and an Fm (maj.7) instead of an Fm6 in measure 3. That's because we are doubling the melody note, which happens to be the 7th of the chord, and we are limiting our harmonies to five tones. The result is perfectly fine.)

It's possible to use even thicker chords (adding 9ths, 11ths, etc.) when playing block style. (Example 5 alternates the F6 with an occasional 7th or 9th.) But this is a good start, and it can provide many hours of fun and exploration. Get your friends to tinkle some glasses in the background, dim the lights and you'll be all set.

Ex.5

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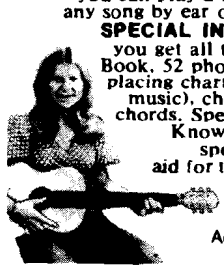

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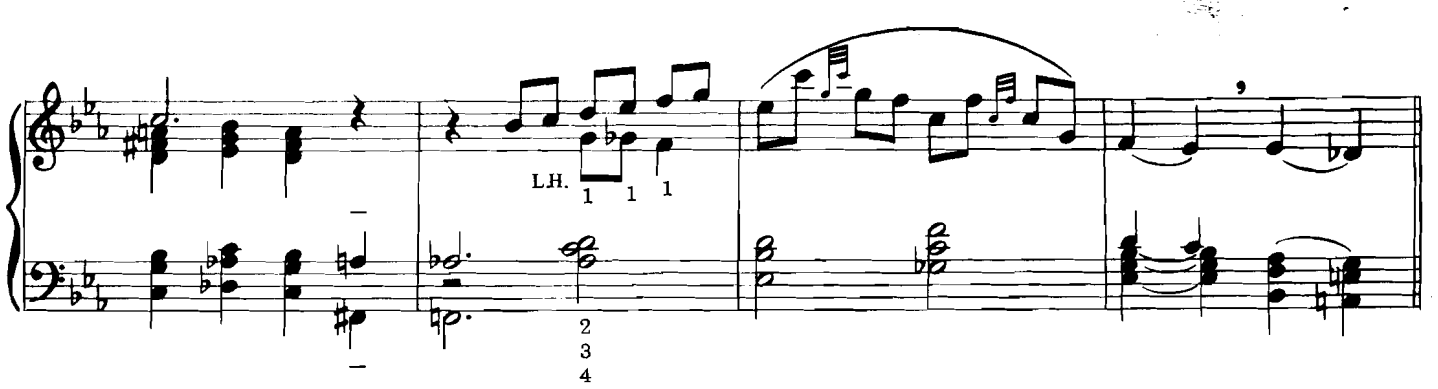
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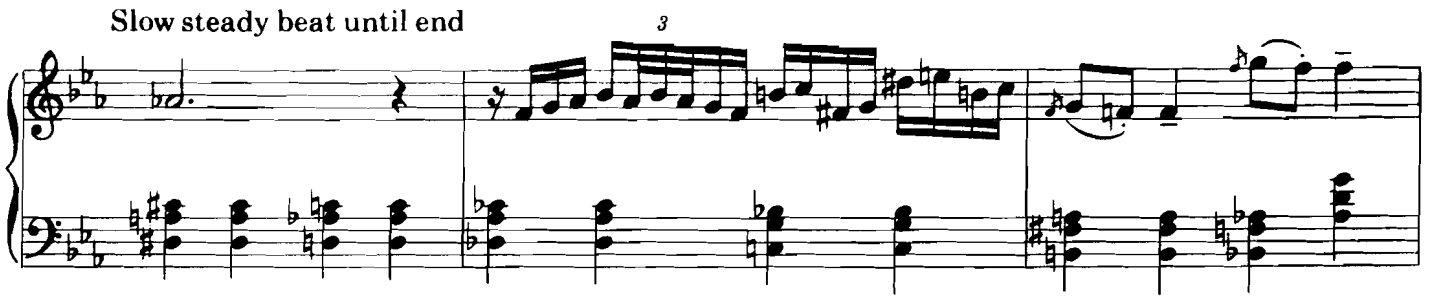
(slowly)
accellerando


Slow steady beat until end
3

mf
mp
3
5 3 2 1 4

14
5
8va
ritard
not fast
18
rit.
8va
slowly, then accell.

DINAH

("FATS" WALLER'S CONCEPTION)

Words by SAM M. LEWIS and JOE YOUNG
Music by HARRY AKST

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ff
8va
f
8va
8va
loco
R.H.

WHO'S SORRY NOW?

("FATS" WALLER'S CONCEPTION)

Words by BERT KALMAR and HARRY RUBY
Music by TED SNYDER

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8
8
8
8
f
p
f
p
f
8
8

(What Did I Do To Be So)
Black And Blue

Words by ANDY RAZAF
Music by THOMAS "FATS" WALLER and HARRY BROOKS

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Am
Dm
(A bass)
Am
No joys for me,
No com - pa - ny,
E - ven the mouse
D9
C
(G bass)
C♯dim
G7
(D bass)
Ab7
G7
ran from my house,
All my life through
I've been so Black And
C7
F7
C7
G9+5
C
Ab7
G7
Ab7
Blue.
I'm white
mf
G7
Ab7
C
Cdim
C
C6
Eb7
in - side,
But that don't help my case.
(Don't ya' know it, broth - er.)

Ab7
G7
Ab7
G7
Ab7
Am
Am
(G bass)
D
(F♯ bass)
F7
'Cause I can't hide what is on my
E7+5
E7
Am
Dm
(A bass)
face, oh! I'm so for - lorn, Life's just a thorn,
mp
Am
D9
C
(G bass)
C♯dim
My heart is torn, Why was I born? What did I do
3
3
3
G7
(D bass)
Ab9
4 fr.
G9
C
F7
C
to be so Black And Blue?
ritard. e dim.

Star Dust

Etoile D'Amour

Words by
MITCHELL PARISH
French translation by
Yvette Baruch

Music by
HOAGY CARMICHAEL

Moderato
mf
rit.
VERSE
C
F9
E7
A7
. . . And now the pur-ple dusk of twi-light time
Et puis le pour-pre de la nuit tomb-ante
Steals a-cross the mead-ows of my heart,
Tra - ver - se le prin-temps de mon coeur,
mp
Dm
C
Am
B7
Em
Ebdim
Dm7
G7
High up in the sky the lit - tle stars climb,
Les é-toiles com - men - cent a grimp - er au ciel
Al-ways re-mind-ing me that we're a - part.
Et mes yeux sont rem - plis et brum - és de pleurs,
C
F9
E7
A7
You wan-dered down the lane and far a-way,
Tu m'as quit - té, mon coeur s'est tout bri - sé,
Leav-ing me a song that will not die,
Me laiss - ant qu'une trist - e mél - o - die,

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Dm C Cdim G7 C6 C+ C 3
Love is now the star dust of yes-ter-day, The mu-sic of the years gone by.
L'a-mour est mainten-ant l'é-toil-e tom-bée, La mél-o-die des nuits pass-ées.
CHORUS C7+5 C F6 Fm6
Some-times I won-der why I spend the lone-ly night
Sou-vent le si-lence de la nuit ré-pète ton nom
mp-mf
C Em A7 Dm7 A7
Dream-ing of a song? The mel-o-dy haunts my rev-er-ie, And I am once a-gain with
Comme un-e chan-son, Sa mél-o-die hante ma rêv-er-ie, Mon rêve me trans-porte dans tes
Dm7 Fm6 G7 Gdim G7 F6 G7 G7+5 C C6
you, When our love was new, and each kiss an in-spir-a-tion,
bras Quand l'a-mour fût jeune, et chaque bai-ser in-spir-a-tion,
D9 C D7 G7 Dm7
But that was long a-go: now my con-so-la-tion is in the star dust of a
Les ann-ées sont pass-ées et ma con-so-la-tion s'é-leve à l'é-toile d'une chan-

G7 Gdim G7 C7+5 F6 Fm6
song. Be - side a gar - den wall, when stars are bright.
son. E - toile du soir brill - ant, é - toile d' amour,
C Em A7
you are in my arms, The night - in - gale tells his fair - y tale
Tu es dans mes bras, Le ros - si - gnole chante et puis s'en - vole
Dm7 A7 Dm7 Fm6 Fm6 D7-5 Fm6 Ab+ Fm7 Fm6
of par - a - dise, where ros - es grew. Tho' I dream in vain. In my
au pa - ra - dis des âmes ra - vies. Donc mon rêve s'en - fuit, Comme une
C G Am C B7 E7 E7+5 F6 A7 Adim G7
heart it will re - main: My star dust mel - o - dy, The mem - o - ry of love's re -
chan - son dans la nuit Et mon é - toile d'a - mour N'est qu'une mé - moire d'une mèl - o -
1. C Ab7 Fm6 G7 C7+5
frain. Some - times I
die. Sou - vent le
2. C C6 Eb+ Cm6 Em7 C6
frain.
die.
l.h.

SERENATA

Words by
MITCHELL PARISH

Music by
LEROY ANDERSON

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CHORUS
F
F♯dim
Gm7
C7
night, while all the world is still Here I
mp
Fmaj7
Dm
G7
G9
B♭dim
stand un - der her win - dow sill; Sing to my
F6
B♭
C9
C7
Fmaj7
F6
G
A9
A7
loved one, SER - E - NA - TA, for me, Sing her your
A6
D6
A♭dim
Gm7
B♭m6
C7
song, love's mel - o - dy. So
mf
F
F♯dim.
Gm7
C7
near, yet we're so far a - part, Here I'll

Fmaj7 Dm G7 G9 Bdim F6
stand till I have won her heart; Go to my loved one, SER-E-
cresc.
Bb C9 Cm6 C7 C D9 rit. D7 F G7 Db6 C7-9
NA-TA, and say: "When you're in love, love finds a
f rit. dim.
1 F6 Gm7 C7 Last time F6 Gm7 C7 Fm
way." To - way." Love al-ways finds
mp a tempo mf mp a tempo
Bbm7 Cm7 Fm Gm7 C7 F Gm7 C7
a way I'll win her heart some
F Ebm6 F Ebm6 F
day.
dim. al fine p

WHO'S SORRY NOW?

Words by BERT KALMAR
and HARRY RUBY

Music by TED SNYDER

Moderately
mf
C7
F7
B♭
B♭m
B♭ dim
o
You smiled when we part - ed, It hurt me some - how, I
Al - though I for - give you, I can - not for - get, How
mp
F7sus
F7
F+
B♭6
thought there was noth - ing worth - while. The
you shat - tered all my i - deals. You
C7
F7
B♭/D
B♭m/D♭
F/C
ta - bles are turn - ing And you're cry - ing now, While I am just
smiled when I told you that you would re - gret, And now you know

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C7 Cdim7 C7 F7 Cm7 F7 E♭/F F7 B♭
learn - ing to smile.
just how it feels.
Who's sor - ry now?
mf
D7 G+ G7 D7 G7 C7
Who's sor - ry now? Whose heart is ach - ing for break - ing each
F7 B♭ Bdim7
vow? Who's sad and blue? Who's cry - ing too?
F C7 F7 C7 F7 E♭/F F7 B♭
Just like I cried o - ver you.
Right to the

D7
G+
G7
G+
G7
end, Just like a friend, I tried to warn you some -
Cm
G7
Cm
Eb m/C
Bb/F
how. You had your way, Now you must
G7
C7
Eb m6/Gb
F7
1 Bb
Bdim7
pay; I'm glad that you're sor - ry now.
F7
Eb/F
F7
2 Bb
Eb m6
Bb
now.

MOONGLOW

By WILL HUDSON
EDDIE DE LANGE &
IRVING MILLS

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Cm G A7 C
say - ing "Dear one, hold me fast." And I start in
D7 G Eb7 G G7 F#7 F7
pray-ing Oh Lord, please let this last. We seemed to float right thru the
E9 A7 D7 Eb7
air, Hea-ven-ly songs seemed to come from ev - 'ry -
D7 C Cm G A7
where: And now when there's MOONGLOW Way up in the blue,
C D7 G Eb7 1. G D7 2. G
I al-ways re - mem-ber that MOONGLOW gave me you. gave me you.

DINAH

Words by
SAM M. LEWIS
and JOE YOUNG

Music by
HARRY AKST

Moderato
G D7 G D7
Car - o - lin-a — gave me
Some de - sign-er — mod- eled
Vamp
fz
G A7 D7 G
E7
Din-ah,— I'm the proudest one be - neath the Dix-ie sun, News is spread-in'—
Din-ah,— He must be the One who made the gold-en sun, Heav - en bless her,—
E7 D Bm7 Em7 A7 D7
Bm7
'bout a wed-din',— I hear church bells ring-in', Here's the song my heart keeps sing-in':
she said "Yes, Sir,"— All day long I'm pray-in', Ev - en in my dreams I'm say-in':
G D7
"Din - ah, — is there an-y-one fin- er — in the state of Car-o - lin - a, —

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G D7 G
— If there is and you know'er, — Show'er to me? — Din - ah, —— with her Dix-ie eyes
D7 G
blaz-in', —— How I love to sit and gaze in - - to the eyes of Din-ah Lee. ——
Em7 Eb+ Em7 A7 D7 Em A7
Ev-'ry night — why do I — shake with fright, —— Be-cause my Din-ah might change her mind a-bout
D7 G
me. —— Din - ah, —— if she wandered to Chin-a, —— I would hop an o-cean
D7 G D7 G
1. 2.
lin-er, —— Just to be with Din-ah Lee! —— Lee! ——

SWEET LORRAINE

Words by
MITCHELL PARISH

Music by
CLIFF BURWELL

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Em
A7
D7
Gee, but I feel proud, want to shout right out loud:
Can't wait till the day, when I'll take her a - way:
CHORUS
Slowly
G
E7
A7
D7
Em
C7
B7
E7
A7
I've just found joy, I'm as hap-py as a ba-by boy With an-oth-er brand new choo-choo toy,
mp-f
D7
G
Am7
D7
D+
G
E7
A7
D7
When I'm with my sweet Lor - raine; A pair of eyes That are blu-er than the
Em
C7
B7
E7
A7
D7
G
sum-mer skies When you see them you will re - a - lize Why I love my sweet Lor-raine,

G7 C E7 Am7 C7 F E7 Am C7
(I'm so hap-py,) When it's rain-ing I don't miss the sun, For it's in my sweet-ie's smile,
F7 E7 Eb7 D7 F7 E7 A7 D7 D+
Just to think that I'm the luck-y one Who will lead her down the aisle; Each
G E7 A7 D7 Em C7 B7 E7 A7
night I pray That no-bod-y steals her heart a-way, Just can't wait un-til that happy day,
D7 G A7 D7 D+ G D7 G
When I mar-ry sweet Lor-raine. I've -raine.
1 2
A
fz

How 'Ya Gonna Keep 'Em Down On The Farm?

(AFTER THEY'VE SEEN PAREE)

Words by
SAM M. LEWIS
and JOE YOUNG

Music by
WALTER DONALDSON

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Bdim F7 B♭
Mis-ter Reu-ben, start-ed wink-ing, And slow-ly rubbed his chin; He
Moth-er Reu-ben, I'm not fak-in', Tho' you may think it strange; But
F B♭ F F♯dim C7 F7
pulled his chair up close to moth-er, And he asked her with a grin:
wine and wom-en play the mis-chief, With a boy who's loose with change:"
B♭ B♭dim F7 F+ B♭
"How 'ya gon-na keep 'em, down on the farm, Af-ter they've seen Pa-ree?
p-f
B♭dim F7 B♭ D♭7 F C7 G♯dim F C7
How 'ya gon-na keep 'em, a-way from Broad-way, Jazz-in' a-roun', And

F7
B♭
G♯dim F7
paint-in' the town?_ How'ya gon-na keep 'em, a-way from harm? That's a
D7
B♭7
mys-ter - y; _____ They'll nev-er want to see a rake or plow,_
Im - ag-ine Reu-ben when he meets his pa,_
E♭
C7
B♭
B♭dim
F7
And who the deuce can par-ley-vous a cow?_ How 'ya gon-na keep 'em down on the farm,
He'll kiss his cheek and hol-ler "oo-la-la!"_
Cm7
F7
B♭
F7
1
2
B♭
Af-ter they've seen Pa - ree?" _____ -ree?" _____
fz

STARDUST

Words by **MITCHELL PARISH**
Music by **HOAGY CARMICHAEL**

Arranged by Joe Frederick

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Em A7 Dm A7 Dm Fm6
1.
G7 G° G7
G7 G7+ Cmaj7 C6 D9 Am/D
D6/9 D7 G7 Dm7 G7 G° G7 C+
2.
Fm9 Fm♭9 Fm6 C C6/9 C6 B7 B7♭5 E7
F6 A7 A° G7 Dm7 Fm♯7 Fm7 C C6/9
T
A
B

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Continued from page 7

appalled, and Naomi made sure that Thomas was known thereafter as Fats Waller.

Fats had discovered the piano when he was six years old. The woman living upstairs had one, and Thomas asked her if he could visit from time to time to play it. He was fascinated with the instrument, and after sitting at the keyboard he would return downstairs, push two straight-backed chairs together, and let his fingers play an imaginary piano. His older brother Robert discovered Thomas at this one day, and was so touched that he persuaded a number of relatives to combine their limited finances and purchase a new Waters upright piano. A piano in these days, and in Harlem, was a luxury, so the Wallers determined to get their money's worth by sending both Thomas and Naomi to piano lessons. Miss Perry, their teacher, found that Thomas was less than enthusiastic when it came to learning scales and note values. In exasperation one day, she asked "Just what is it you want to play?"

"Music, ma'am, and that's all!"

Ever the shrewd one, young Tom asked about the stack of popular sheet music on the top of Miss Perry's piano.

"Would you play this for me, Miss Perry?"

Miss Perry would smile and play the song, then a second time at her pupil's request, while Fats stared at her hands. After the lesson he would race home to his piano and play the same piece, having memorized the melody and the position of the notes on the keyboard. In later years, he would sit at the keyboard of a player-piano, letting his fingers find the keys being depressed automatically as the piano roll played, stopping the roll periodically to memorize a new chord or passage.

Discovering the keyboard changed Fats Waller's life. He was consumed with the desire to play music, in whatever fashion he could. In school he was encouraged to play the violin and string bass, and he played piano during morning assemblies. It was in these assemblies that Fats discovered "performing" at the piano, as he rolled his eyes and made faces over his shoulders, while adding a pronounced swing to the traditional anthems. Eventually he joined the school orchestra.

Fats' love of music was received with mixed feelings by his parents. His mother had a beautiful singing voice, which she used to great effect in church and on the street-corners, while his father preached. Mr. Waller, on the other hand, had hopes of his son entering the ministry, and was quite distressed with his son's obsession with popular ("sinful") music. However, with Fats' induction to the school orchestra, Mr. Waller felt that classical music might save his son, so he took Fats to hear the great Paderewski at Carnegie Hall. Fats was thrilled by the experience, but Mr. Waller's ambitions for his son went unfulfilled. This tension between father and son was never resolved, and Fats frequently ran away from home following heated arguments with his father. Fats would even sneak into his father's church at night to play the organ, assisted by his friend Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Adam's assistance was vital in this enterprise, not only to shove the portly Waller through the basement window of the church, but also to pump the organ pedals while Fats played.

"It was in these assemblies that Fats discovered 'performing' at the piano, as he rolled his eyes and made faces over his shoulders, while adding a pronounced swing to the traditional anthems."

Following the First World War, Harlem became much more metropolitan, with an ever greater influx of southern blacks. It also became an exciting mecca for sightseers and the wealthy from downtown. So it was that local entrepreneurs took steps to encourage this "tourist trade" by establishing many small clubs and cabarets, which in turn stimulated the employment of waiters, dancers and musicians. Thus, the most talented musicians were drawn to the area, with its promise of work and the opportunity to meet other musicians, and contemporary music began to evolve incredibly rapidly in this atmosphere. The piano was the center of many social activities, including the *rent party*. When a family needed help paying the rent, it would buy food and drink, hire a piano player, and charge admission at the door. There was no shortage of excellent piano players — Eubie Blake, Luckey Roberts, Willie "The Lion" Smith, and James P. Johnson, to name a few, were disciples of a generation of keyboard "professors" who migrated to New York from the rest of the country. *Ragtime* was then in vogue, originating in the midwest with Scott Joplin, Tom Turpin and others. By the time it reached New York, though, it had become *Stride Piano*, a style that encouraged improvisation to a greater extent than did *Ragtime*. So, when Fats fell in love with the piano, he couldn't have been in a better place at a better time. People at rent parties were used to hearing "cutting contests" between the legends of stride piano, as each player vied to out-do the other improvising and embellishing a melody. It is not surprising that these players developed awesome technique and dexterity, along with improvisational skills that may never be matched. Fats, meanwhile, had talked his way into playing the pipe organ at the Lincoln Theater during the silent films that played there. During the intermissions, his friends from school would shout "Hey, Fats, make it rock!", and he invariably brought the place to its feet. Even as his fame spread for these antics, Fats was hungry for more music to play. Russell Brooks was one of the notable stride pianists in town, and one day Fats sneaked into a tent dance to watch him play. "Fats, why don't you get with this music? I heard you at the Lincoln and you're doing all right, but you gotta swing out more."

"I want to play like that," Fats replied, "but my fingers get all tangled up when I play fast. I've been tryin' to play some rags, but they're hard to learn. I need someone to help me — a real jazz pianist, like you or Jimmy Johnson."

Brooks promised to introduce Fats to James P. Johnson, and Fats bounded out of the tent with delight. Well, almost. His foot caught one of the guy-ropes, and he managed to pull the entire tent down around him. From under the canvas he heard Russell Brooks shout, "Why don't you get someone to untangle your feet, too!"

Fats did meet the remarkable James P. Johnson, who taught him to heed the rudiments of music that Miss Perry had tried to instill earlier. Now, though, Fats studied with a vengeance, and his progress amazed Johnson. Soon, Johnson felt it was time to meet the formidable Willie "The Lion" Smith. Nicknamed for his bravado as an artillery gunner in France, Smith was also quite gruff in his manner, and was visibly unimpressed upon meeting the young Fats. However, Johnson had Fats play during a break at Leroy's, where Smith was appearing, and a nervous, sweating Fats played a ragtime piece. Smith worked at not appearing to notice, but after Fats' performance he came over to the piano, and softened somewhat — "That was pretty good, kid."

Willie "The Lion's" trademark was a cigar and bowler hat cocked over one eye, and Fats took to sporting this very same look. Smith, Johnson and Waller were to become inseparable, as they made the rounds of Harlem night after night. Soon another budding pianist began to tag along, Bill Basie. He and

Continued on page 44

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Fats became good friends, and the man who would be known in later years as Count Basie openly idolized Fat's talent at the keyboard. . . .

The song played by Fats in the contest at the Roosevelt Theater, *Carolina Shout,* was composed by James P. Johnson. Fats had already begun composing his own music, so when Andy Razaf approached him, he welcomed the possibility of collaborating. Before we leave the subject of nicknames, it is interesting to note that Andy Razaf was born Andrea Menentania Razafinkeriefo, grandson of the U.S. consul in Madagascar.

Music publishers downtown soon got used to seeing Fats and Andy in their offices, playing their latest tunes. Fats would play while Andy sang his lyrics, and they sold many songs to a music industry hungry for new songs. So hungry, in fact, that Fats and Andy frequently sold the same song to several different publishers on the same day. Andy always took things more seriously than Fats, as far as the quality of their product was concerned, and he once tore up a copy of their latest offering rather than sell it to a publisher at the going rate of fifty dollars. Fats wasn't so choosy, though. It is tragic to think that he sold many of his classic compositions for cab fare, or for the price of a few drinks. Fats recorded several piano rolls for the QRS Piano Roll Company. When he ran into one of the managers of the company one day, he offered to record a roll for five dollars. He then lowered the price to three dollars. J. Lawrence Cook gave him ten dollars and, as they walked together into a music store, pointed to a stack of QRS rolls recorded by Fats.

"When Fats fell in love with the piano, he couldn't have been in a better place at a better time."

"See that name, Fats? That's worth more than three dollars."

In the 1920s, an executive of OKEH Records discovered a vast market for the so-called 'race records', recorded by black musicians. Ralph Peer, who was also instrumental in bringing country music to the ears of the city, became a firm believer in the Waller talent, especially since not only blacks were buying his records, but whites as well. Similarly, a number of all-black revues were being staged on Broadway, and very successfully. One of these, *Keep Shufflin',* opened in 1928 with several numbers written by Fats and Andy. The show was a hit, although the bar did its worst business in history during the intermission. Why? James P. Johnson and Fats Waller played piano duets from the pit, and the audience refused to leave their seats.

More shows followed. *Load of Coal* was commissioned by the owners of a famed night spot in Harlem, Connie's Inn. Andy knew that to get the score written, he had to lure Fats away from Harlem and his friends. Praising his mother's cooking, he got Fats to New Jersey's Asbury Park, where in several hours they composed *My Fate Is In Your Hands, Zonky,* and *Honeysuckle Rose.* Actually, during work on *Honeysuckle Rose,* Fats' attention began to wane, and he suddenly 'remembered' a date in Harlem. Leaving Andy with some melodic fragments and lyric ideas, he dashed off. Andy toyed with the ideas, then suddenly found himself inspired. Reaching for the telephone, he called all of Fats' favorite spots until he found his partner. The song was completed over the telephone, and has become one of the most famous in their repertoire.

A new show was planned for 1929, titled *Hot Chocolates.* The show was rehearsed and staged at Connie's Inn before it was brought downtown. Cab Calloway appeared in the show, and a trumpeter from Chicago, Louis Armstrong, came to prominence when he joined the show downtown. As the show was preparing to move downtown, Fats and Andy felt some new material was necessary. So, working together in Fats' apartment they stumbled onto an idea that became *Ain't Misbehavin',* which is probably the most famous song born of the Waller-Razaf team. At about the same time they also wrote *What Did I Do To Be So Black and Blue* (in this issue).

Fats Waller the performer was given national exposure on a series of broadcasts on radio station WLW in Cincinnati, called "The Fats Waller Rhythm Club." He toured extensively with his band, "Rhythm", not only to gain exposure, but also to keep the wolf from his door. As always, his expenditures exceeded his earnings. He went to Europe several times, playing to enthralled audiences in England and Scotland, and finding a second home in Paris, where his reputation as a jazz musician had preceded him. However, his heart always remained in Harlem, and when the money ran out he came home to his family and friends.

Fats Waller the private man was

"Fats and Andy frequently sold the same song to several different publishers on the same day."

complex, and he often regretted the image of him held by the public. Despite his easy-going personality and legendary fondness for food, drink, and women, he was happiest playing classical music and spirituals at the organ, alone. He was a black man in America, and encountered racial prejudice many times, even in the Victor recording studios. Yet he believed in the fundamental goodness of the human race (his father need not have been so disappointed in him after all), and he was unfailingly generous to anyone in need of his help. He was often depressed at the thought that he might not produce a body of music as memorable and pertinent to the condition of the black person as George Gershwin had produced with the score to *Porgy and Bess.* Waller knew Gershwin well, having met him when the latter used to haunt the rent parties and tent dances in Harlem to hear the music that Fats and his fellow pianists were playing. It was certainly a case of mutual admiration.

Fats did his share, though. He was discovered by Hollywood, and appeared first in the RKO film, *Hooray For Love,* then in *King of Burlesque.* During the filming of the second film, Fats objected strenuously to portraying a stereotypical black character, and got his own way.

Following extensive touring and recording in the '30s and early '40s, Fats was cast in a major film being produced by 20th Century Fox. The film was *Stormy Weather,* and also featured Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson and Lena Horne. In this film Fats offers the classic line, "One Never Knows, Do One?"

It was inevitable that constant travel, work, drinking, and the occasional run-ins with process servers seeking the unpaid alimony for his first wife would take its toll. Yet Fats refused to slow his pace. Even while racing from show to show, Fats would stop to play benefit performances at every military base along the way. The army was able to show its gratitude by flagging down an express train in Omaha to get Fats to Hollywood the next day for a show. Playing at the Zanzibar Club that night, Fats found himself playing directly

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Bewitched • Cast Your Fate To The Wind • How Deep Is Your Love • How High The Moon • I've Got You Under My Skin • The Lady Is A Tramp • Old Devil Moon • People • Save The Last Dance For Me • September Song
Plus *... Pop Piano ... Guitar Workshop ... Song Contest ... Cole Porter & Kurt Weill bios ... Music Cruise*

"Hello, Fatsy Watsy. Remember me from Cleveland?"

under the air-conditioning vent, which bathed him in frigid air as he sweated with the exertion of performing. Even after he came down with a severe case of influenza he barely slowed down, promising he would rest on the train trip home. As his manager Ed Kirkeby remembers, Fats was tiring visibly as he played his last night at the Zanzibar club, and would not have given his typical high-energy performance had it not been for a beautiful woman who walked up to him to revive an old acquaintance: "Hello, Fatsy Watsy. Remember me from Cleveland?" He came alive for the rest of the evening, but it was an exhausted Waller that boarded the Santa Fe Chief the next day, bound for New York.

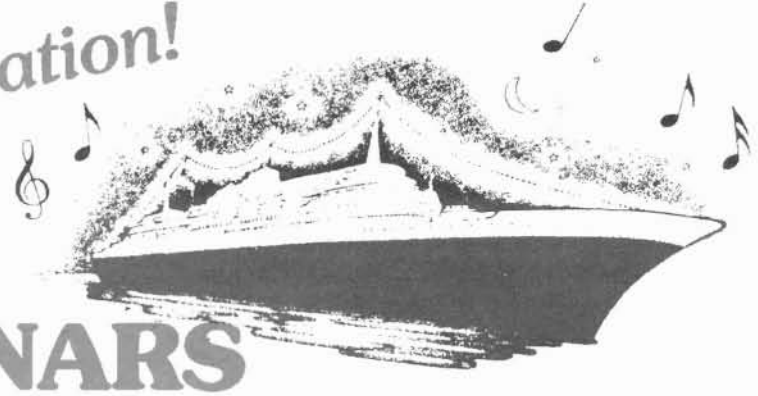
"Oh, man, I can't take this much longer!"

Assured by Kirkeby that he wouldn't have to, he fell asleep. He woke up once again to comment on the cold as a Kansas blizzard howled outside, then fell asleep for the last time. Fats Waller died at about 5 a.m., while the train was stopped in Kansas City. It was December 15, 1943. Louis Armstrong was stuck in a train heading west, just a few miles away.

"Fats plays last date to packed house. Famous composer-pianist funeralized at Abyssinia Baptist Church on Monday."

These were the headlines for a story carried in the New York Amsterdam News. The funeral was conducted by the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., pastor of the Abyssinia Baptist Church, and the boyhood friend who had pushed Fats through the windows and pumped the organ pedals for him. Among the pallbearers that led the enormous funeral procession to Long Island were James P. Johnson and Andy Razaf. ♩

Take A Learning Vacation!



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Wednesday, Oct. 7 - Depart St. George's, 2:30 p.m.
Arrive Hamilton, Bermuda, 5:00 p.m.
Thursday, Oct. 8 - A full day in Bermuda
Friday, Oct. 9 - Depart Hamilton, 3:00 p.m.
Saturday, Oct. 10 - A full day at sea.
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- Stuart Isacoff - *pianist, composer, author,* and Editor of Virtuoso and Keyboard Classics Magazines.
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